

Search for Self in Chitra Benerjee Divakaruni's Literature

Dr. Vandana Singh* Varsha Tiwari**

*Research Guide, Madhyanchal Professional University, Bhopal (M.P.) INDIA

** PhD Scholar, Madhyanchal Professional University, Bhopal (M.P.) INDIA

Abstract : Self Crisis is the biggest psychological problem nowadays. People want their name should be highlighted at least among few people. Personal Identity is not afrenzy but a factor for confidence and a variable to know about the surrounding. A person is a mere a dead thing in the absence of his or her own self. Self is an inactive phenomenon, active only in the presence of a name. It takes its birth from consciousness's infinite world. It knows no boundaries. Chitra Benerjee Divakaruni is the lady with the touch of feministic style. Chitralkha Banerjee or Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni was born in Calcutta, India in 1956 in a middle class family of Rajendra Kumar Banerjee and Mrs. Tatini Rajendra Kumar. She is an Indian-born American author, poet, a novelist, a fictionist and a professor pf Writing in Betty and Gene Mc David dept. of creative writing in the University of Houston. Her short story collection, "Arranged Marriage", won an American Book Award in 1996. Two of her novels ("Sister of My Heart" and "The Mistress of Spices"), including one short story *The Word Love* were adapted for movies. She talks about the existence of the women and she also cares about their place in society.

The present paper aims to evaluate modern women's search for self in the novels of Chitra the most prominent American Indian writer in the context of literary world and attributes of womanhood.

Keywords: Atmosphere, approaches, conflicts, revival, sufferings, survival, sacrifices and struggles.

Introduction - Self-identity is an aspect that every human in the world has. Without it, a person is in danger of being negatively affected by those around him/her and by the outside world. Some people are grappling with this identity-forming phase in their search for self-definition. This is reflected in so many ideas and innumerable writings. Therefore, this research aims to describe the search for self in the writings of two Non residential Indian female writers of American Diaspora but before criticizing their criteria of defining self, it is necessary to have a look on the concept of self from different angles. According to Merriam's Webster, Etymologically, the word self is derived from Germanic origin as *zelf*, and then transferred into and German's *selbe*. It was used to express the emphatic sense of "I" and "Myself" during the early 20th century. Later it became a word referred to the body. 'Self' actually plays a very vital role in human life. It provides a meaning-making lens and focus one's attention on an object with a specific personal view by neglecting other features of the immediate context. That is the reason why Collins English Dictionary defined it in a different way by saying the 'self' a possessive grammatical protocol to be used to form words which indicates that you do something to yourself or by yourself. Discussion about the female-self in a society where books are made for men to write, read, print and buy. It does not

mean that the woman did not desire and try to hold the book in her hands but she learned to speak, read and write after a thousand years of silence. She learnt to tell her story to the world while fighting the difficult situation but when her story was published, it did not reach her hands. It was habitually looted by male power. The 'book' stands here as a symbol of the knowledge of the world and the understanding of one's own being, from which the woman was deprived in a very systematic way. If we replace the word 'book' with the word 'life', then the meaning comes out even more openly that the matter is not only of the book, but also of the woman's life, the life which the woman has never been able to read, understand, hear, distribute according to her wish. Living life on her own terms is a far cry even today. The matter is so much that the woman reads the book of her life and writes it herself but how long does she live for hers and this is what we call identity crisis.

Search for self- identity or identity crisis is one of the most dominating thematic concerns in the novels of women literature. It starts from the suffrage movement of the First World War and settles itself during the very last generation of females.

Whether East or West, women is always remained in search of identities. India has a great past for this. Ras Sundari Devi of Bengal, after raising and giving

birth to 12 children, learned to read and write secretly in middle age and wrote her autobiography 'Amar Jibon'. Savitri Bai Phule of Maharashtra opened a school for the education of girls. There is also the example of Tarabai Shinde, who raised her voice against male power and caste system in the 19th century and also of Pandita Ramabai, who worked throughout her life for the rehabilitation and education of poor, helpless, outcast, widowed women.

This was a period of renaissance in which the whole of India was really sensitive towards women's rights. Still, writing as a woman was not easy. There were many restrictions on his life and writings. That's why the woman sometimes wrote anonymously and sometimes wrote under a pseudonym. Then she also had the audacity to write and publish in her own name. The editors of most of the magazines were men, but women received support and guidance as well. It is a different matter that men's insistence was focused on a good wife, a loving mother, a devoted woman, domestic knowledge and ideal qualities. At that time, magazines like 'Grihalakshmi' under the editorship of Gopal Devi and 'Stree-Darpan' under the editorship of Rameshwari Devi Nehru were also published, whose concern was to teach women to become ideal housewives and also to make them capable of intervening in social and political life by spoiling her own identity.

In the first half of the twentieth century, the political-social participation of women also increased a lot in the freedom movement, as a result, women not only thought about women's issues but also thought and wrote about knowledge and science around the world. But in the latter half of the twentieth century, after independence, when women's political usefulness ended, a strange attitude of men towards women's writing emerged. However, during this period, women also searched for their personal freedom and started creating new values of female identity by challenging the moral values of the male-dominated society, hence this attitude of men flourished further. This vision was to include the entire writing of women within the scope of 'women's discourse'. Women's discussion was a very heavy word through which women's natural desire to gain rights could be confused with many difficult questions but writing is writing, not male-female, hence why literature is divided on the basis of male and female?

Indian Literature has a long series of such female writers who speak about female existence in such a way that everybody can feel it. Usha Priyamvada- *Pachpankhambe Lal Deewaryan* (1961), *Rokugi Nahi Radhika* (1967), *Sheshayatra* (1984), *Antarvashi* (2000), *Bhaye Kabir Udas* (2007), Chandrakiran Sounrexa- *Chandan Chandni* (1962), *Vanchitha* (1972), Krishna Sobti- *Mitro Marjani* (1967), *Surajmukhi Andhere Ke* (1972), *Zindinama* (1979), *Dilodanish* (1993), *Samay Sargam* (2000), Shashiprabha Shastri - *Amaltas* (1968), *Boats* (1974), *Stairs* (1976), *Behind the Shadows* (1979), *Because*

(1980), *Karkarekha* (1983) 1992), *Silent Questions* (1993), *Har Din Itihas* (1995), Mehrunnisa Parvez- *Aankhon Ki Dahleez* (1969)

Although the women in English Literature, started writing with the arrival of Victorian Period in which many female novelists began to publish. It sees John Stuart Mill's challenging task to transform Victorian moral issues but in this journey, there was nothing like feminism. We meet feminism when this river of female literature riches to a new kind of feminist fiction shore after World War II, as female novelists, inspired by the prospect of a solely female art form and also alarmed by the striking similarity between feminist militancy and its male counterpart. When World War I broke out in 1914, perhaps activist women felt a sense of collective guilt; certainly W.S.P.U. (Women Social and Political Unions) members relocated their resources and energy from the very vote to the battle with suspicious alacrity and the new movement named Feminism arrived. Although females did not admit their writings as feminist - writings but feminists around the world have differentiated them by their causes, goals, and intentions depending on time, culture, and country. Most Western feminist historians assert that all movements that work to obtain women's rights should be considered feminist movements, even when they did not (or do not) apply the term to themselves. Some other historians limit the term "feminist" to the modern feminist movement and its progeny, and use the label "proto feminist" to describe earlier movements. (Botting 278).

Search for self in Chitra's Literature: Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, English-language Indian novelist, writer of young, children, adult women and sometimes of current modern issues, who excelled in evoking characters and moods through visual images ranging from villages to the cities, religious to the modern and the meteorological to the botanical is an award-winning writer, social activist, speaker and professor, and the author of 21 books such as *Sister of My Heart*, *Mistress of Spices*, *Before We Visit the Goddess*, *Palace of Illusions*, *The Last Queen* and *The Forest of Enchantments*. Her newest novel, *Independence*, depicts the experiences of three sisters in strife-torn Calcutta as India frees itself from the British yoke.

Her work has been published in several magazines, anthologies and journals including *The Best American Short Stories*, *The Atlantic* and the *New Yorker* with O. Henry Prize Stories. These stories and literary works are translated into more than 40 languages. Dutch, Hebrew, Bengali, Hungarian, Turkish, Hindi and Japanese literature is also benefited by the translated version of Banerjee's works. Her works are used in films, plays, dance dramas, operas and other forms of performing arts.

Arranged Marriage (1995) is thus an anthology of short stories on the subject of traditional Eastern arranged marriages by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni. The stories do not attempt to make a moral claim about the millennia-old tradition; rather, they constitute a mosaic of perspectives

that validate its lived experience in the modern world. It is the first story of "Arranged Marriage," and is told from the perspective of an anonymous seven-year-old whose life has no meaning except to be aware that his mother suffers from domestic abuse. The title of the story is "The Bates". The story line set in such an atmosphere which expresses the marriage as a synonymous term with the violence against women. It is woven and characterized as a phenomenon well-knitted with the multiple role determined for a women and it is defined as *Dhol, gawar, kshudra, pashunari, sakalsakalkeadhikari* (Tulsi Das Samudndra Kop 395) under the above quatrain of holy book the act based on gender relations that results in women's physical and psychological damages is not suffering but it refers to the hierarchy of power which is necessary for male in desire of domination. It can be used consciously sometimes in marital relations and sometime as a mechanism for annihilation of women to realize them that they are negligible. The story is set on the same theme that how a lady by the fear of society could not take any stand for herself. It is set in hot Calcutta dark deals with strained marital relationship of a couple. The story not only shows the failure of arrange marriage in the context of modern times but also expresses that how in an arranged marriage the circumstances in most of the middle-class married women becomes a question of existence by being the victim of domestic violence and it is in vain to try hard to find an escape.

The woman along with her eleven-year-old daughter runs away from her husband's house for a sojourn in an old man's house, her distant relative who lived all alone. Soon she writes a letter to her husband to allow her back home. Again while explaining the reasons of her return the woman says, "I could not stand it, the stares and whispers of the women, down in the marketplace, the loneliness without him" (Divakaruni 12). Now the question is what is the theme of the story? The fiction gives us only the idea of a woman being beaten by her husband. 'What for' is not brought to question. This was perhaps because that might have digressed the fiction to several other related issues. Therefore, she focuses on domestic violence between spouse specifically. After dealing with this issue in the fiction, Divakaruni, through symbols of bats, hints at a solution but

the cost is big. The loss of hard-earned silver ring from the fish symbolises loss of the bond of love and charm that makes house a home. The psychological pressure given by society on women is not a type of open violence against women but it confines them under a circumference and realize that they have no place except to grow under the shadow of a male and this pressure has a social distribution around the world.

L.P Garcia says, "being indicated as a kind of universal violence, practiced pre-eminently by husband, partners or people very close to women"(Garcia)

Conclusion: Divakaruni's works are largely set in India and the United States, and often focus on the her own experiences of South Asian immigrants. She has a full length account of the pleaser and pain in diaspora whether she writes for children as well as adults, and has published novels in multiple genres, including all the problems if realistic fiction, historical fiction, magical realism, myth and fantasy etc. She is one such first generation immigrant writer. She has spent part of her life in America. She is a prolific writer, story teller, poet and social activist. She as an expatriate has penned down her minute observations and experiences in her works but above all her works majorly deal with feminism and diasporic consciousness of female which are problematic areas of contemporary postcolonial theory. Divakaruni's has skilfully narrated socio psychological trauma and disillusionment of female immigrants and their adaption to such situations. The stories also outline the various issues women face in social system which is still patriarchal to a great extent. Some of those stories are being analysed in the light of various issues of diasporic female consciousness.

References:-

1. Collins English Dictionary Hardcover – 4 June 2007, India Publisherp : Collins; Ninth edition (4 June 2007).
2. Botting, Eileen Hunt; Houser, Sarah L. (2006). "'Drawing the Line of Equality': H (Botting 278) annah Mather Crocker on Women's Rights". The American Political Science Review. 100 (2): 265–278.
3. Garcia LP, Freitas LRS, Höfelmann DA. Avaliação do impacto da Lei Maria da Penha sobre a mortalidade de mulheres por agressões no Brasil, 2001-2011. Epidemiol Serv Saude.
